General Assembly

Distr.: General
20 February 2002

Fifty-sixth session
Agenda item 119 (*b*)

Resolution adopted by the General Assembly

[*on the report of the Third Committee (A/56/583/Add.2)*]

56/159. Strengthening the role of the United Nations in enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections and the promotion of democratization

The General Assembly,

Recalling its previous resolutions on the subject, in particular resolution 54/173 of 17 December 1999,

Reaffirming that United Nations electoral assistance and support for the promotion of democratization are provided only at the specific request of the Member State concerned,

Noting with satisfaction that increasing numbers of Member States are using elections as peaceful means of discerning the will of the people and of confidence-building, thereby contributing to greater national peace and stability,

Recalling the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted on 10 December 1948,[1] in particular the principle that the will of the people as expressed through periodic and genuine elections shall be the basis of government authority, as well as the right freely to choose representatives through periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures,

Taking note with interest of Commission on Human Rights resolutions 2001/41 of 23 April 2001 and 2001/72 of 25 April 2001,[2]

Recognizing the need for strengthening democratic processes, electoral institutions and national capacity-building, including the capacity to administer fair elections, increase citizen participation and provide civic education, in requesting countries in order to consolidate and regularize the achievements of previous elections and support subsequent elections,

Welcoming the support provided by States to the electoral assistance activities of the United Nations, inter alia, through the provision of electoral experts,

[1] Resolution 217 A (III).

[2] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2001, Supplement No. 3* (E/2001/23), chap. II, sect. A.

including electoral commission staff, and observers, as well as through contributions to the United Nations Trust Fund for Electoral Observation,

Welcoming also the contributions made by international and regional organizations and also by non-governmental organizations to enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections and the promotion of democratization,

Having considered the report of the Secretary-General on United Nations activities aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections,[3]

1. *Welcomes* the report of the Secretary-General;[3]

2. *Commends* the electoral assistance provided upon request to Member States by the United Nations, and requests that such assistance continue on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the evolving needs of requesting countries to develop, improve and refine their electoral institutions and processes, recognizing that the fundamental responsibility of organizing free and fair elections lies with Governments;

3. *Requests* the Electoral Assistance Division of the Department of Political Affairs of the Secretariat, in its role as coordinator of United Nations electoral assistance, to continue to inform Member States regularly about the requests received and the nature of any assistance provided;

4. *Requests* that the United Nations continue its efforts to ensure, before undertaking to provide electoral assistance to a requesting State, that there is adequate time to organize and carry out an effective mission for providing such assistance, including the provision of long-term technical cooperation, that conditions exist to allow free and fair elections and that the results of the mission will be reported comprehensively and consistently;

5. *Recommends* that, throughout the entire electoral process time-span, including before and after elections, as appropriate, based on needs assessment missions, the United Nations continue to provide technical advice and other assistance to requesting States and electoral institutions in order to help to strengthen their democratic processes;

6. *Notes with satisfaction* the comprehensive coordination between the Electoral Assistance Division and the United Nations Development Programme, and encourages further engagement of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in this context;

7. *Requests* the United Nations Development Programme to continue its governance assistance programmes in cooperation with other relevant organizations, in particular those that strengthen democratic institutions and linkages between civil society and Governments;

8. *Reiterates* the importance of reinforced coordination within and outside the United Nations system in this regard;

9. *Notes with appreciation* additional efforts being made to enhance cooperation with other international, governmental and non-governmental organizations in order to facilitate more comprehensive and needs-specific responses

[3] A/56/344.

to requests for electoral assistance, and expresses its appreciation to those Member States, regional organizations and non-governmental organizations that have provided observers or technical experts in support of United Nations electoral assistance efforts;

10. *Recalls* the establishment by the Secretary-General of the United Nations Trust Fund for Electoral Observation, and calls upon Member States to consider contributing to the Fund;

11. *Encourages* the Secretary-General, through the Electoral Assistance Division, to continue responding to the evolving nature of requests for assistance and the growing need for specific types of medium-term expert assistance aimed at supporting and strengthening the existing capacity of the requesting Government, in particular by enhancing the capacity of national electoral institutions;

12. *Requests* the Secretary-General to provide the Electoral Assistance Division with adequate human and financial resources to allow it to carry out its mandate and to continue to ensure that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights is able to respond, within its mandate and in close coordination with the Division, to the numerous and increasingly complex and comprehensive requests from Member States for advisory services;

13. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session on the implementation of the present resolution, in particular on the status of requests from Member States for electoral assistance, and on his efforts to enhance the support by the Organization for the democratization process in Member States.

88th plenary meeting
19 December 2001